

AUGUST 1964

Cuba

Pers: Orlich, Francisco J.

Org 1 Organization of American States

Ch 4 Guatemala

Pol 2 -01 US/Costa Rica

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SPECULATIONS ABOUT CUBA

OUR SPECIAL Correspondent in Washington, D.C., reports that there is considerable speculation about possible Cuban exile plans to invade their homeland with the backing of several of the Central American governments—as well as of the United States—as a result of a visit here by Costa Rica's President, Francisco J. Orlich.

President Orlich had extensive talks with President Johnson as well as with high State Department officials at the end of May on undisclosed subjects. He is the first Latin American President to talk in person to President Johnson since the latter became President.

It is well known, although little publicised, that Costa Rica is allowing Cuban exiles to have military training camps on Costa Rican territory near the Nicaraguan border and that air strips have been constructed and are in use by the Cuban exiles. There are similar installations, it is reliably known, in neighbouring Nicaragua and along the coastal area of the Republic of Honduras.

It seems unlikely that any of these little countries in Central America could permit such an exile operation and training programme without the full knowledge and approval of agencies of the United States.

A Call for Action

Of particular interest was a statement made here to newsmen by President Orlich in which he said: "It would be naive to believe that by our sincere efforts to establish social justice and economic progress we can eliminate the threat of Soviet and Chinese imperialism, which has been brought to the very doors of our hemisphere". Then, apparently referring to Cuba, he called for the use of military force, if necessary, "to restrain those who do not understand the strength of (international) law."

Costa Rica has been one of the leaders among the Latin American governments, calling for definite action against Cuba by the membership of the Organisation of American States, as a result of the report that Cuba had taken "aggressive action" against Venezuela last year in smuggling a large arms cache for pro-Communist terrorists and guerrillas, aimed at overthrowing the existing movement. The Foreign Ministers of the O.A.S. countries were scheduled to meet in Washington on July 21 to consider the matter and, if possible, to decide what action should be taken against Cuba.

Democracy on the Defensive

Officially, the purpose of the visit of the Costa Rican Chief of State was to thank President Johnson for the emergency assistance given to Costa Rica as a result of almost continuous eruptions of a volcano in central Costa Rica, near the capital, which had spread volcanic ash over large areas for a period of 18 months. Coffee production has been cut down by 25 per cent. as a result—an export that represents 65 per cent. of the country's income.

In addition, President Orlich stressed the achievements of the Alliance for Progress. But he made it clear that, in his opinion, the menace of Communism has reduced the advantages of all the good that the Alliance might represent and that in the Central American area "democracy has been put on the defensive."

Long-time observers in Central America know that all five of the Republics, and particularly their governments, are constantly fearful of pro-Castro, Communist penetration in the area, with possible resultant internal Communist-inspired uprisings with Cuban support. It was to this fear, which undoubtedly has to some extent restrained a larger economic growth in the area, that the Costa Rican President referred in his statement.

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